Garbage Gazette

Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection

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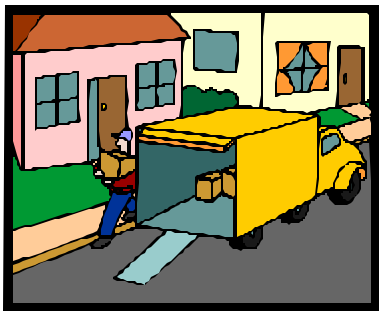
Moving Lightly on the Environment

Most people find the summer months relaxing, but others are busy packing, but not for vacation. They are moving. If you have ever had the experience of moving or helping some else move even once, you know it can be a physical and emotional challenge.



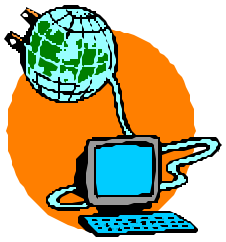
But moving takes its toll on the environment as well. Whether you are purchasing your dream home or downsizing, moving means garbage, and plenty of it. There's the stuff you want and need and then there are all those other things - good, usable items you simply don't need or want anymore and probably lots of cans, bottles and sprays in the garage, basement, workbench and under the sinks. And then there's the packing materials - the cardboard boxes, newspaper and bubble wrap! After the move, you will probably be purchasing new things as well. How can you move and practice the 3 R's - Reduce, Reuse and Recycle?

To make things easier on you and the earth, the EPA has put together a practical guide called **"Moving Out, Moving In".** (Find it at http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/aging/move.pdf.) In the guide, you will find suggestions for saving money and helping others while protecting the environment and lightening your load. It has information on reuse, recycling, and safe disposal of the unwanted goods in your home and provides guidance on assessing the need for new purchases, as well as buying environmentally friendly products.

Here are recycling and reuse options mentioned in the guide and some others to consider:

Household Items and Clothing.

- This might take a little planning, but if you are computer savvy, eBay and other similar auction-type sites can be a fun and profitable way of finding a home for your unwanted treasures.



- Just want to get rid of it or looking for a freebie? Check out www.freecycle.org. The Freecycle Network is a project of RISE Inc., a nonprofit organization whose mission includes reducing waste. Membership is free but you must sign up with a local group. (You might even try posting any bubble wrap you used in your move.) Remember, all items you post must be free of charge.

- Most people are familiar with the organizations that take household donations like Salvation Army and Goodwill. However, many places of worship, shelters and other non-profits accept used items, even cars. Look in the phone directory yellow pages under "Social Services" or on the web for ideas. Some organizations will even pick-up if you arrange it in advance. Remember to make a list of what was donated for tax purposes. Since organizations will not put a value on your donation, consult with your tax advisor or the IRS for guidance.

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW). You might be surprised at the amount and variety of chemicals

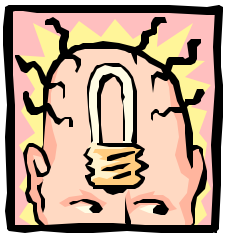
from art supplies to pesticides that you can find in your home, especially if you have lived in the same place for years. In Connecticut, most communities are served by HHW collections from spring to early fall. If the contents of a container are not labeled, err on the safe side and bring it to a collection site. The DEP site has the current HHW collection schedule at http://www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/hhw/hhw.htm. Note: some chemicals such as picric acid or crystallized ethers are shock sensitive and explosive and are very dangerous to move. If you think you may have these chemicals, ***do not move the containers***. Call your local fire department for assistance.

Electronics. Computers, televisions, cell phones and VCRs are a large part of Connecticut 's waste. Some of these items present a disposal problem because they are not only big and bulky but may contain hazardous materials like lead (present in the the glass in TVs and computers). You can find disposal options at the DEP's web site at http://www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/recycle/elecrecy.htm.

Latex Paint. Latex paint is considered non-hazardous, so you can't bring it to a HHW collection. Options are: donate it (Habitat for Humanity, theatre groups, etc.), use it up or dry it out. You can dry out the paint by filling it with kitty litter, sawdust or shredded newspaper and then dispose of it in your regular trash. There are also commercial waste paint hardeners available at home supply and hardware stores.

Cardboard Boxes and Packing Materials. Be creative! Use towels, linens or even clothing to protect fragile items. If you must use "peanut" type packing materials, try getting the cornstarch kind that dissolve in water. Some mail and shipping services will take loose "peanut" type packing, (but not bubble wrap) for reuse. If you are in a new town or have moved into a new situation (e.g. an apartment or assisted living), find out about how recycling is handled there by calling the town or contacting building management. Don't forget to recycle cardboard boxes and newspaper.

Getting Help. If you feel too overwhelmed with the prospect of going through years of accumulation or you don't have time to figure out what to do with all of it, don't just give up and literally trash everything. There are people who specialize in helping you get organized. Try this website for a professional organizer in your area: http://www.organizerswebring.com or ask your realtor for a recommendation.



Lastly, now that you have done your part to reuse and recycle by finding good homes for your unwanted belongings, disposing of hazardous waste in the proper way and recycling as much as you can, *what about "reducing"?* Use your move to have a fresh outlook about what you purchase for your new home. Ask yourself: Is this purchase really necessary? Is it energy efficient? Is it made with any recycled content? Is it from a sustainable source? The earth will benefit and you may find you will, too.

Fostering Sustainable Behavior
Using Community Based Social Marketing

According to Doug McKenzie-Mohr, an environmental psychologist, training, workshops, brochures and information intensive campaigns may lead people to change their attitudes (about energy efficiency, recycling, whatever the topic), but that rarely correlates to a behavior change (i.e., energy retrofits, increased recycling). Similarly, the assumption that people will change their behavior to act in their economic self-interest is also a myth. In fact, research shows that, even when you show people how to save money (e.g., by buying compact fluorescent bulbs or covering their hot water heater), they don't do it. So much for articles, newsletter, brochures, and ad campaigns! While they might work to convince someone to buy a Toyota instead of a Honda, they are not usually effective in changing behavior.

So what is the most effective way to get people to implement changes in their lives that benefit them and the environment? McKenzie-Mohr believes the answer is Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM).

On May 11th, seventy people involved in environmental outreach gathered at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven for a training session on CBSM. The event was sponsored by the DEP, The Connecticut Recyclers Coalition (CRC), United Illuminating, SCCRWA and HazWaste Central. McKenzie-Mohr taught the basics of CBSM using compelling examples of how this approach can stimulate behavior changes toward more sustainable living.

So what is the CBSM solution? McKenzie-Mohr asserts that people are much more likely to change behavior based on personal appeals and making an initial commitment. For example, the posting of signs to encourage people to stop idling at commuter lots and schools resulted in no behavior change (i.e., idling rates stayed the same). However, when a personal approach and commitment were used, idling behavior changed dramatically. First, student interns approached drivers who were waiting for a passenger and talked to them briefly about idling and clean air. Then, drivers were asked if they would be willing to turn off their engines while waiting. In addition, drivers were given a sticker for their windshield to remind them to turn off their engine while waiting. The combination of these approaches resulted in significant behavior change.

Of course, there are other components to CBSM, too. According to McKenzie-Mohr, successful CBSM involves: "identifying barriers and benefits to a sustainable behavior, designing a strategy that utilizes behavior change tools, piloting the strategy with a small segment of a community, and finally, evaluating the impact of the program once it has been implemented across a community." The CBSM web site, http://www.cbsm.com, provides lots of great info on designing and evaluating programs; data bases of articles, case studies, graphics, and reports; and discussion forums. These tools are applicable to a wide range of environmental issues, including waste reduction, water efficiency, pollution prevention, and transportation.

By the way, did you know that you could save money, gas, and contribute to cleaner air by turning off your motor if you are idling for *only 10 seconds* or more? Are you willing to turn off your engine the next time you need to wait for a passenger or run in for that quick cup of coffee? Why not make a commitment to try it for the next month? Let us know how you did.

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